

Reaching the Heights: Methods of Ascertaining the Topics of a Surahs

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السورة

في طرق التوصل إلى محاور

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Shaykh ‘Adnān ‘Abdul-Qādir

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INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His aid and ask His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of ourselves and our actions. Whosoever is guided by Allah cannot be misguided by another, and whosoever is misguided by Allah cannot be guided by any other. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, without partner, and I testify that Muḥammad is His slave and Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾¹

“O you who believe, be mindful of Allah, as is His due, and make sure you devote yourselves to Him, to your dying moment.”¹

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَرِيبًا﴾

“O people, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless

1 Āl-‘Imrān: 102

men and women far and wide; be mindful of Allah, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: Allah is always watching over you.”²

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ۖ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ

ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾^(٧١)

“O you who believe, be mindful of Allah, speak in a direct fashion and to good purpose, and He will put your deeds right for you and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will truly achieve a great triumph.”³

To proceed: The most truthful of all speech is found in the Book of Allah, and the best guidance is that brought by the Prophet (ﷺ). The worst of all matters is what is newly invented, for indeed it is a religious innovation, and every such religious innovation is misguidance and all misguidance leads to the Fire.

Every book, story, sermon or lesson which contains a beneficial subject matter must consist of an introduction and conclusion, and in between those two, central topics which illustrate and clarify the subject being discussed.

Allah has perfectly mentioned the most pressing issues in the Qur’an, and given to each *surah* a noble and important theme. In order to explain each theme, each *sūrah* consists of an introduction, conclusion and clear topics which demonstrate and illustrate the theme. This is done in the most eloquent, concise and comprehensive manner using the subtlest and most beautiful of words.

2 Al-Nisā; 1

3 Al-Aḥzāb: 70-71

This allows the layperson to appreciate its beauty and relatability, and the intellectual savours its nuances and subtleties which nourish the soul and amaze the mind. Everyone finds within its words and context real and perfect examples that are not only intellectually satisfying, but also spiritually comforting in the best possible way.

The noble one is he whom Allah has honoured to serve His Scripture, “The best of you are those who study and teach the Qur’an,” and then uncover its pearls. I wished to attain a portion of this honourable position and to unveil some spark of its light, as a service to the readers of the Qur’an, in which I mention methods which ascertain the topics of each individual *sūrah*.

I have entitled this work, “Reaching the Heights: Methods of Ascertaining the Topics of a *Sūrah*.”

May Allah accept this endeavour from His poor servant, and grant both the author and reader His pardon and grace. May He make this work sincerely for Him, and grant as its reward the enjoyment of hearing His recitation of the Qur’an and the honour of seeing His Noble Face. Indeed, He is the Most Generous of those asked, the Most Benevolent of those who gift, and the Most Compassionate King.

‘Adnān ‘Abdul-Qādir

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Chapter One

A Repetitive Verse or Phrase

It is possible to reach one of the topics in a *sūrah* through the repetition of the same verse. Oftentimes, what is mentioned between the two repeated verses is a single topic. For example:

“Remember My blessing”

In *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Allah says,

﴿يَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ٤٧ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ٤٨﴾

“O Children of Israel, remember how I blessed you and favoured you over other people. Guard yourselves against a Day when no soul will stand in place of another, no intercession will be accepted for it, nor any ransom; nor will they be helped.”⁴

4 Al-Baqarah: 47-48

Allah then goes onto mention the transgressions of the Children of Israel and closes by repeating similar verses to the above,

﴿يَبْنَى إِسْرَءِيلَ أَذْكَرُوا نِعْمَتِي الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنفَعُهَا شَفْعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾﴾

“O Children of Israel, remember how I blessed you and favoured you over other people. Guard yourselves against a Day when no soul will stand in place of another. No compensation will be accepted for it, nor intercession be of use to it, nor will they be helped.”⁵

These two verses begin and end a major topic discussed in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*; describing the category of the hypocrites. *Sūrah al-Baqarah* discusses three main topics and this is one of them.

The theme of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* is to exemplify the categories of people in relation to the message of *tawhīd* which is to worship Allah alone. There are three categories of people in this regard: the monotheistic believers, the disbelievers, and the ever-changing hypocrites who outwardly show faith but inwardly hide disbelief.

Allah sets forth examples for each of these categories. For the category of the disbelievers, we are given the manifest example of Iblīs, and therefore his story is relayed to us. The ideal example of the hypocrites are the Jews who purported to show faith in the divine Messages and Scriptures but hid their disbelief,

﴿وَإِذَا الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِعَضُّهُمْ إِلًا بَعْضٌ قَالُوا لَا تَحْدُثْهُمْ يَمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُخَاجِبَكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ﴾

“When they meet the believers, they say, ‘We too believe.’ But when they are alone with each other they say, ‘How could you tell about Allah’s revelation [to us]? They will be able to use it to argue against you before

5 *Al-Baqarah*: 122-123

your Lord!”⁶

The third category is that of the believers. The perfect example of this categories is found in the two close friends of Allah: Ibrahim (عليه السلام) and our Messenger, Muhammad the son of Abdullāh (ﷺ).

Thus, when Allah wants to give the example of the hypocrites in the Jews, he begins and ends it with the verse,

﴿يٰۤاَيُّهَاۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلُ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِيۤ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ﴾

“O Children of Israel, remember how I blessed you and favoured you over other people.”⁷

This topic therefore is contained in the midst of the repetition of this verse.

“Set up no other god besides Allah”

Allah says in *Sūrah al-Isrā’*,

﴿لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُوْمًا مَّخْذُوْلًا ۝۲۲﴾

“Set up no other god besides Allah, or you will end up disgraced and forsaken.”⁸

Allah then later mentions another verse similar to the first,

6 *Al-Baqarah*: 76

7 *Al-Baqarah*: 47

8 *Al-Isrā’*: 22

﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتُلْقَىٰ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا﴾⁹

“... and set up no other god besides Allah, or you will be thrown into Hell, blamed and rejected.”⁹

The theme of *Sūrah al-Isrā’* is the continuous blessings, divine miracles and honours afforded to those who hold firm to the call of *tawhīd*.

From these honoured blessings, is the blessing the Prophet (ﷺ) received in being given an exemplary, pure and wise *sharī’ah*. A *sharī’ah* that ennobles individuals and societies, strengthens the family and brings communities together to be a single united *ummah*.

Allah draws our attention to this wise set of laws and practices by mentioning a number of rulings beginning with,

﴿لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ﴾

“Set up no other god besides Allah.”¹⁰

Allah commands us to worship Him alone,

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ﴾

“Your Lord commanded that you should worship none but Him.”¹¹

He then enjoined upon us to show respect and honour to our parents and relatives, and to refrain from harming our children,

9 *Al-Isrā’*: 39

10 *Al-Isrā’*: 22

11 *Al-Isrā’*: 23

womenfolk or transgressing against any individual. He charged that we should show kindness to the orphan, and to those with whom we have covenants and contracts. Allah further directed that we should be just towards everyone and to not be arrogant or haughty. He then concluded this exemplary set of laws and practices by stating,

﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتُنْقِلَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَكُومًا مَدْحُورًا﴾ (٣٩)

“... and set up no other god besides Allah, or you will be thrown into Hell, blamed and rejected.”¹²

Thus, the repetition of the two aforementioned verses show the beginning and ending of this topic.

“Woe, on that Day, to those who denied the truth!”

In *Sūrah al-Mursalāt*, this verse is repeated a number of times. Between each repetition, one of the topics of the *surah* is discussed.

The theme of *Sūrah al-Mursalāt* is that Allah has placed reminders and warnings for His servants so that they may believe and return to Him. However, there is an ultimate limit after which these reminders will end and no excuses will be accepted thereafter.

Allah has placed the Day of Judgement as the general time limit for all of creation,

﴿وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أَقْنَتِ ۖ ۝ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا يَوْمَ يُجْلَتْ ۖ ۝ يَوْمَ الْقَضَى ۖ ۝ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الْقَضَى ۖ ۝ وَيْلٌ ۖ ۝ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ﴾ (١٥)

“And the messengers given their appointed time. For what Day has all

12 *Al-Isrā’*: 39

this been set? The Day of Decision. What will explain to you what the Day of Decision is? Woe, on that Day, to those who denied the truth!”¹³

At the same time, Allah has placed a specific time limit for each nation, wherein if it does not believe, it will be destroyed,

﴿أَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ نَبْعَثُهُمْ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ
لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٩﴾﴾

“Did we not destroy the first [of them]? We shall make the last follow them. This is how We deal with the guilty. Woe, on that Day, to those who denied the truth!”¹⁴

Allah also gave to each individual within the respective nations a distinct time limit, beginning with birth and ending with death. Each of those limits ends with the verse,

﴿وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٥﴾﴾

“Woe, on that Day, to those who denied the truth!”

Therefore, each topic is separated with this verse.

13 Al-Mursalāt: 11-15

14 Al-Mursalāt: 16-19

Chapter Two

Every Story is a Topic

The Qur'an is not a story book. Rather, it is a book of guidance and principles for the happiness of mankind in this world and the next. Stories are mentioned in the Qur'an so as to exemplify the principles and topics which align with the theme of the *sūrah*. This is why at times, a number of stories are narrated in a single *sūrah*, as each of these stories represents a topic in the *sūrah* for those who reflect upon this. Example include:

Sūrah Ṣād

Allah mentions a number of the stories of the Prophets in *Sūrah Ṣād*.

From these stories is the story of the Prophet (ﷺ) with the disbelievers, the story of Dāwūd with the two disputants, the story of Sulaymān, the story of Ayyūb and the story of Iblīs refusing to prostrate before Ādam. This is because the theme of *Sūrah Ṣād* is patience, so each story represents a manifestation of patience.

This is shown in the story of the Prophet (ﷺ) with the disbelievers, in that the latter despite their disbelief and falsehood, encourage one another to remain patient upon their falsehood,

﴿إِن أَمْشُواْ وَأَصْبِرْ أَوْعِلْ أَلِيَّتُكُمُ﴾

“Walk away! Stay faithful to your gods!”¹⁵

Therefore, you O Messenger, are more worthy of remaining patient upon the truth. This shows the importance of remaining patient in the face of people’s rejection and ridicule.

The story of Dāwūd with the two disputants shows the need for patience and courage when it is time to admit a mistake and return to the truth. This is something especially difficult to do, in particular for leaders and people of high social status,

﴿وَلَمَّا فَتَنَّا۟هُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُۥ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا۟ وَأَنَابَ ۝٢٤﴾

“Then Dāwūd realised that We had been testing him, so he asked his Lord for forgiveness, fell down on his knees and repented.”¹⁶

The manifestation of patience in the story of Sulaymān is seen in the patience needed to seek nearness to Allah by sacrificing what is most beloved to you from your worldly possessions. Sulaymān seeks this nearness to Allah by giving up his most beloved possession; Arab horses,

﴿الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُحِبُّونَ﴾

¹⁵ Ṣād: 6

¹⁶ Ṣād: 24

“Well-bred light footed horses.”¹⁷

He sacrificed them for Allah and left them when they distracted him from the ‘Aṣr prayer, so he slaughtered them,

﴿فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ ۝٣٣﴾

“He started to stroke their legs and necks.”¹⁸

In the story of Ayyūb we see patience in personal strife over a prolonged period of time as he displayed for 18 years,

﴿إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ۝٤٤﴾

“We found him patient in adversity; an excellent servant! He, too, always turned to Allah.”¹⁹

In the story of Iblīs’ disobedience to Allah we see the highest and greatest example of all patience; that of Allah, the One true God,

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مَنَ إِلَهٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ۝٦٥ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ ۝٦٦﴾

“...the One, the Prevailing. Lord of the heavens and earth and everything between, the Almighty, the Most Forgiving.”²⁰

Despite Allah’s power and might, He was patient upon Iblīs’ arrogance and refusal,

17 Ṣād: 31

18 Ṣād: 33

19 Ṣād: 44

20 Ṣād: 65-66

﴿قَالَ فِعْزَتِكَ لِأَغْوِيَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ﴾ ﴿الْإِعْبَادُكَ مِنْهُمْ الْمُحَاصِنَ﴾

“I swear by Your might! I will tempt all but Your true servants.”²¹

There is also the topic of being patient upon worshipping Allah once you have been blessed and guided to do so. Do not be like Iblīs who transgressed and disbelieved after being raised by Allah to the station of the angels.

We then see how each of these stories represents a topic within this *sūrah*.

Sūrah Maryam

The theme of *Sūrah Maryam* is how divine signs and good news come to those who are afflicted with calamities in the midst of their hardships. Allah mentions a number of stories which demonstrate the different forms in which these glad tidings come.

At times, the glad tidings come as something you did not imagine would happen or something which was an impossible hope. We see this in the story of Zakariyyā,

﴿إِنَّا نَبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَىٰ﴾

“We bring you good news of a son whose name will be Yaḥyā.”²²

Zakariyyā did not anticipate such news despite his long held hope for it.

²¹ Ṣād: 82-83

²² Maryam: 7

Sometimes, the good news comes from the tongue of the person you least expected it from, just as we see it coming from the lips of the infant Īsā after his mother gives birth to him. His mother had said,

﴿يَلَيْسَ لِي مِنْ قَبْلُ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا ۖ فَكَادَتْهُمَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَنْ تَخْرُجَ قَدْ
جَعَلَ رَبُّكَ تَحْتِكَ سَرِيًّا ۖ وَهَزَى إِلَيْكَ بِجَذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسْقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا جَنِيًّا ۖ فَكُلِي
وَأَشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا﴾

*“I wish I had been dead and forgotten long before all this! But a voice cried to her from below, ‘Do not worry: your Lord has provided a stream at your feet. And, if you shake the trunk of the palm tree towards you, it will deliver fresh ripe dates for you. So eat, drink, be glad...”*²³

At other times, a succession of glad tidings may come your way at the same time. We see this in the story of Ibrāhīm when he received the good news of Ishāq who would then be followed by a grandson Ya’qūb, so that he would see them both,

﴿وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ كُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ۖ﴾

*“We granted him Ishāq and Ya’qūb and made them both Prophets.”*²⁴

Perhaps at times the good news comes as you hear someone recite Allah’s words and they impact your heart. You feel as if you are being directly addressed and spoken to with the treasures of these divine words. This is what Mūsā experienced when Allah spoke to him directly,

﴿وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا ۖ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا ۖ﴾

23 Maryam: 23-26

24 Maryam: 49

“We called to him from the right-hand side of the mountain and brought him close to Us in secret communion; out of Our grace We granted him his brother Hārūn as a Prophet.”²⁵

Sūrah al-Anbiyā’

The theme of *Sūrah al-Anbiyā’* is how to prove resurrection and life after death for both humans and *jinn* to the disbelievers.

Humans and *jinn* were created from one or some of the following six components: fire from which the *jinn* were created, water and soil which once mixed together made clay from which humans were created, air which dried the clay, the soul and sixthly, the fluid which comes from intercourse.

In the story of the Prophet Ibrāhīm, Allah shows us how fire submits to Him,

﴿يَنَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ٦٩﴾

“Fire, be cool and safe for Ibrāhīm.”²⁶

Allah mentions in the story of Nūḥ how he drowned his people using the floods, thus showing how water submits to Him,

﴿إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ٧٧﴾

“They were evil people, so We drowned them all.”²⁷

25 Maryam: 52-53

26 Al-Anbiyā’: 69

27 Al-Anbiyā’: 77

In the story of Dāwūd, Allah states how all soil and stones obey His command,

﴿وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ﴾

*“We made the mountains celebrate our praises with Dāwūd...”*²⁸

Likewise, in the story of Sulaymān, we see how air, and in this case a strong wind also submits to Allah’s will,

﴿وَأَسْلَمَ مَنْ رَجَعَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا﴾

*“We harnessed the stormy wind for Sulaymān, so that it sped by his command to the land We had blessed...”*²⁹

The soul and its submission to Allah is also mentioned by Him in the most beautiful and imperceptible way. The beginning of death for most humans is from terminal illnesses, but if Allah wishes, the soul will not depart irrespective of how debilitating the illness as is shown in the story of Ayyūb,

﴿أَنِّي مَسْنِي الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ﴾ ﴿فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ﴾

*“Suffering has truly afflicted me, but you are the Most Merciful of the merciful. We answered him, removed his suffering...”*³⁰

Perhaps, someone is due to be killed or beheaded by royal decree, and the sword is placed upon their neck which shows that there is

28 Al-Anbiyā’: 79

29 Al-Anbiyā’: 81

30 Al-Anbiyā’: 83-84

hardly a chance for reprieve. However, if Allah should command that they shall continue to live than everything will change. We see this with Ismā'īl; the sword was upon his neck but Allah did not wish death for him nor that his soul should depart, so divine pardon was given to him,

﴿وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾³¹

“And remember Ismā’īl, Idrīs and Dhul-Kifl, they were all patient.”³¹

Worse than this is to be in the metaphorical mouth of the lion, but despite this if Allah does not will for the soul to depart, then it cannot. Yūnus was swallowed by the whale, so he entered into the darkness of its belly but Allah did not decree that his soul should leave him there,

﴿فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَن لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾³²
 ﴿فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَجَّعْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمَةِ﴾

“...but then he cried out in the deep darkness, ‘There is no god but You, glory be to You, I was wrong. We answered him and saved him from distress.’³²

This is a detailed description of how the soul departs and that it only leaves when Allah allows it to do so, so the soul too is under Allah’s control.

Similarly, life enters the body by His command. Let us look at the example of Zakariyyā, he was sterile and his wife was barren when she was young let alone in old age. However, Allah decreed that life should enter through their reproductive systems, and they were

³¹ Al-Anbiyā’: 85

³² Al-Anbiyā’: 87-88

blessed with a child which they never imagined. They thought no life would come from them so they had a child, the meaning of whose name was life,

﴿فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَىٰ﴾

“We answered him, We gave him Yahyā.”³³

More amazing than this, is that there should come from a female who only holds the ‘X’ chromosome, a male child who holds the ‘XY’ chromosome. How does the why ‘Y’ chromosome come from a female who never had relations with a man?

﴿وَالَّتِي أَحْصَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

“Remember the one who guarded her chastity. We breather into her from Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for all people.”³⁴

Therefore, these six components of life; fire, water, soil, air, the soul and fluid from which are human and *jinn* are created; all are under Allah’s command. Is then Allah not able to bring them back to life another time?!

³³ *Al-Anbiyā’*: 90

³⁴ *Al-Anbiyā’*: 91

Chapter Three

Commentary During or After a Story

At times, the lesson of the story is mentioned plainly, and therefore the issue for which the story is being narrated is clear.

The Story of Ṭālūt

When Allah commanded the people of Ṭālūt to fight in His path some of them had a number of objections. How can someone give their wealth away for fighting? Doesn't fighting leave behind orphans, widows and generally lessen the population? How can someone actively go towards their own death? How can the few fight and overcome the many?

Allah responds to these objections. Firstly, He mentions the principle of why fighting has been legislated; that there are at times great benefits and noble goals which can be attained through it. In particular, the greatest goal achieved is calling people to the worship of Allah alone, in return for which the soldier receives forgiveness and mercy,

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾³⁵

*“But those who have believed, migrated, and striven for Allah’s cause, it is they who can look forward to Allah’s mercy: Allah is Most forgiving and merciful.”*³⁵

Allah then answers the remaining objections.

Who is better? The one who spends his wealth for the sake of the noblest goal for which this universe was created, and which brings with it divine love and salvation, mercy and forgiveness, or spending that wealth on the base desires of drink and gambling?

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ﴾

*“They ask you about intoxicants and gambling: say, ‘There is great sin in both...’”*³⁶

As for the orphaning of children, then Allah will care for them and protect them. Allah’s divine care is greater than parental care, and Allah will legislate for their care and well-being,

﴿وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ﴾

*“They ask you about orphans: say, ‘It is good to set things right for them. if you combine their affairs with yours, remember they are your brothers and sisters.’”*³⁷

35 Al-Baqarah: 218

36 Al-Baqarah: 219

37 Al-Baqarah: 220

The widowed women will find other husbands to replace those they have lost by Allah's permission, as Asmā' bint 'Umayy, the widow of the martyr Ja'far ibn Abū Ṭālib who died on the battlefield, found a better husband in Abū Bakr. Allah will further prohibit Muslims from marrying polytheists so that they instead marry widows amongst them,

﴿وَلَا مَآءٌ مُّؤَمِّنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ﴾

*"...a believing slave woman is certainly better than an idolatress, even though she may please you."*³⁸

Separation between spouses does not only occur with the death of one of them. Spouses may separate in life through divorce which is why Allah then mentions verses about divorce. Furthermore, the time of death is pre-appointed and will strike whether a person is on the battlefield or in bed with their spouse. One can never escape death no matter how hard they try,

﴿الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا﴾

*"Consider those people who abandoned their homeland in fear of death, even though there were thousands of them. Allah said to them, 'Die!'"*³⁹

And whilst fighting leads to an inevitable lessening of the population, its remedy is in marriage. Allah has legislated marriage, through which numbers increase by six times or more, which is why the verses of marriage are then mentioned. Moreover, Allah will place strict conditions so that married life can continue blissfully and divorce becomes less prevalent, which is why we then have the

38 Al-Baqarah: 221

39 Al-Baqarah: 243

verses speaking of the conditions of divorce.

As for the objection of how a person can go towards their own death, then the answer is that everyone must die. Death will not be delayed by a moment. The date of death has been preordained, and the time at which the soul will leave the body has been specified and will not be delayed.

Therefore, the servant has a choice: either death can come in the best of conditions which is whilst a person is spreading the flag of *tawhīd* or death comes at that pre-appointed time but they are in bed? A person therefore is not going towards death, but death is always coming towards them. However, a person must decide what state they want to be in when death comes as there is no escape from it,

﴿الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا﴾

*“Consider those people who abandoned their homeland in fear of death, even though there were thousands of them. Allah said to them, ‘Die’”*⁴⁰

They could not delay death despite trying to escape from it.

The number of Muslims may well be smaller than the number of the enemy, but Allah mentions the example of Ṭālūt and his battle against Jālūt. The story ends with the statement,

﴿كَمِّنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ﴾

*“How often a small force has defeated a large army with Allah’s permission.”*⁴¹

40 Al-Baqarah: 243

41 Al-Baqarah: 249

This comment comes to show the topic here, which is that the small number of Muslims in opposition to the enemy is not an excuse to stop fighting nor is it an obstacle to victory.

The Man with the Two Gardens

Allah mentions in *Sūrah al-Kahf* the story of the man with the two gardens. This man had become distracted by the world and its pleasures from Allah's worship and remembrance. At the conclusion of the story, Allah says,

﴿الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَةُ الصَّالِحَةُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرُ أَمَلٍ ۝٤٢﴾

“Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life, but lasting good deeds have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope.”⁴²

This verse is the topic for which this story is told.

The Story of Ādam in *Sūrah al-A'raf*

The theme of *Sūrah al-A'raf* is the message and warning. Allah mentions the story which began the sending of all the Messengers; the story of how Iblis tempted Ādam to eat from the tree. This exposed to him his nakedness and he was removed from Paradise as a result. After the story, its objective is stated,

﴿يَبْنَىءَ آدَمَ لَا يَفْتَنَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ ۚ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ﴾

42 *Al-Kahf*: 46

“Children of Adam, do not let Satan seduce you, as he did your parents, causing them to leave Paradise...”⁴³

This is a warning against Satan. Succumbing to Satan’s temptations leads to exposure, whereas consciousness of Allah leads to being veiled and protected,

﴿يَبْنَىءَ اَدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَیْكُمْ لِبَاسًا یُّؤَارِی سَوْءَ تَکْمُرِشَ وَرِیْشًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰی ذٰلِکَ خَیْرٌۙ﴾

“Children of Adam, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness and as adornment for you; the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all garments...”⁴⁴

43 Al-A'rāf: 27

44 Al-A'rāf: 26

Chapter Four

An Unexpected Change in Context

A sudden change in subject often points to a new topic and lesson. You are reading a number of verses on a certain subject, then suddenly a new subject begins.

“If a troublemaker brings you news...”

The theme of *Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt* is to warn Muslims against the dangers of the tongue. The *sūrah* begins by mentioning etiquettes of addressing leaders, the greatest example of which is the Prophet (ﷺ), in whose presence one should not put themselves forward,

﴿لَا تَقْدُمُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ﴾

“Do not push yourselves forward in the presence of Allah and His Messenger.”⁴⁵

45 *Al-Ḥujurāt*: 1

Likewise, do not raise your voice above his but lower it in his presence. Also, do not harm him by shouting out to him whilst he is in his home with his family,

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ينادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ۝ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝﴾

“But most of those who shout to you from outside of your private rooms lack understanding. It would have been better for them if they had waited patiently for you to come out to them, but Allah is All-Forgiving and Merciful.”⁴⁶

This is all one topic. Allah then suddenly changes topic,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِمِجْمَلَةٍ ۝﴾

“O you who believe, if a troublemaker brings you news, check it first, in case you wrong others unwittingly...”⁴⁷

This sudden change marks a new topic which in this case is the spreading of rumours; a major danger of the tongue that leads to families splitting, communities breaking and the *ummah* becoming disunited.

“We have commanded man to be good to his parents”

The theme of *Sūrah al-Aḥqāf* is to show the different ways in which the disbelievers turned away from Allah’s religion and the message of *tawḥīd*. They turned away from the testimony of the scholars of the Children of Israel that affirmed the correctness of the final message,

⁴⁶ *Al-Hujurat*: 4-5

⁴⁷ *Al-Hujurat*: 6

﴿وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ ۖ فَآمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا۟﴾⁴⁸

“What if one of the Children of Israel testifies to its similarity and believes in it, and yet you are too proud to?”⁴⁸

They also turned away from the testimony they found in their Divine Scriptures that affirmed the correctness of the final message,

﴿وَمِن قَبْلِهِ ۖ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۚ وَهَٰذَا كِتَابٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانِ عَرَبِيًّا﴾⁴⁹

“Yet the Scripture of Mūsā was revealed before it as a guide and a mercy, and this is a scripture confirming it in the Arabic language...”⁴⁹

Allah then suddenly changes the topic after this,

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا﴾⁵⁰

“We have commanded man to be good to his parents...”⁵⁰

And Allah says further on,

﴿وَالَّذِي قَالَ لَوْلَدَيْهِ أُفٍّ لَّكُمَا أَتَعِدَانِي أَنُ أَخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَيْتَ الْفُرُونَ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا يَسْتَغِيثَانِ اللَّهَ

وَلَيْكَ ءَا مِ نْ﴾

“But some say to their parents, ‘What? Are you really warning me that I shall be raised alive from my grave, when so many generations have already passed and gone before me?’ His parents implore Allah for help; they say, ‘Alas for you! Believe!’”⁵¹

48 Al-Ahqāf: 10

49 Al-Ahqāf: 12

50 Al-Ahqāf: 15

51 Al-Ahqāf: 17

What then is the link between the testimonies of the previous scriptures and being good to parents and not disrespecting them?

The latter is a form of rejection; to reject the good that someone does towards you. The greatest good displayed is that which Allah shows. However, they ignore His bounties and disbelieve in His grace even though they enjoy His blessings and use His favours.

Sūrah al-Aḥzāb

Allah says at the beginning of this sūrah,

﴿مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّن قَلْبَيْنِ فِي حَوْفِهِۦ﴾

*“Allah does not put two hearts within a man’s breast.”*⁵²

He then says,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا
وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا﴾

*“O you who believe, remember Allah’s goodness to you when mighty armies massed against you: We sent a violent wind and invisible forces against them.”*⁵³

Allah then goes onto mention details concerning the Battle of the Confederates as well as the Campaign of Banū Qurayẓah,

﴿وَأَوْزَنَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَيَدْرَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطُوعُهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا﴾

52 Al-Aḥzāb: 4

53 Al-Aḥzāb: 9

“He passed on to you their land, their houses, their possessions, and a land where you had not set foot: Allah has power over everything.”⁵⁴

Allah then suddenly changes topic to the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ),

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ إِن كُنتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْتُمْ أُمْتِعْكُمْ وَأَسْرِحْكُمْ

سَرَّاحًا جَمِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾﴾

“O Prophet, say to your wives, ‘If your desire is for the present life and its finery, then come, I will make provision for you and release you with kindness.’⁵⁵

This change in subject matter is so as to move onto another topic which meets with the overall theme of the *sūrah*. The theme of *Sūrah al-Aḥzāb* is the protection, preservation and purification of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his wives, children and family. Allah purified the heart of the Prophet (ﷺ) from all spiritual diseases and made it sincere to Him. He then cleansed the city of the Prophet (ﷺ) from its enemies during the Battle of the Confederates, as well as the final stronghold of the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah. Allah then goes onto mention how He purified the household of the Prophet (ﷺ) and chose for him the best and purest of wives.

54 *Al-Aḥzāb*: 27

55 *Al-Aḥzāb*: 28

Chapter Five

The Division of the Qur'an into Quarters and Eighths

It is possible to benefit from the efforts of the scholars who divided the Qur'an into parts (*juz'*), quarters and eighths. At times, the verse at the beginning of a new eighth points to a new topic.

Sūrah al-Nisā'

The theme of *Sūrah al-Nisā'* is a call to have the best etiquettes and manners with Allah and with one another, so that there is unity and we become like a single family. In reality, we are a single family as we all come from one father and one mother.

In the fourth eighth, Allah begins by saying,

﴿وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ
وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ﴾

*“Worship Allah; join nothing with Him. Be good to your parents, to relatives, to orphans, to the needy, to neighbours near and far...”*⁵⁶

This marks the beginning of the topic of being good to others after worshipping Allah alone. Human nature is to love those who show kindness and this brings the hearts of people closer together.

In this *sūrah*, one of the eighths begins with the following verse,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ﴾

*“Allah commands you to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners, and, if you judge between people, to do so with justice...”*⁵⁷

This is the beginning of the topic on how to preserve internal harmony. It is achieved through overcoming internal disputes via a set of established just principles that govern interpersonal relationships.

The topic of *da‘wah* is also mentioned. The *ummah* cannot be united as a single body unless they all heed the same call. That single call is the message of the Prophets which is the message of *tawhīd*. The Prophets are all one family like paternal brothers. Thus, the final eighth in this chapter begins with,

﴿إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَىٰ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زُبُورًا﴾

“We have sent revelation to you as We did to Nūḥ and the prophets after him, to Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, Ishāq, Ya‘qūb and the Tribes, to ‘Īsā, Ayyūb, Yūnus,

56 Al-Nisā’: 36

57 Al-Nisā’: 58

Therefore, sometimes the beginning of a new eighth in the *sūrah* points to a new topic.

Sūrah al-Mā'idah

The theme of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* is the covenant with Allah to worship Him alone and the ways that preserve this covenant. In the second eighth of this *sūrah*, Allah says,

﴿وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمْهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا﴾

*“Allah took a pledge from the Children of Israel. We made twelve leaders arise among them, and Allah said, ‘I am with you: if you keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, believe in My Messengers and support them, and lend Allah a good loan...”*⁷⁵⁹

This verse covers the topic of the pledge Allah has taken.

In the final eighth of this *sūrah*, Allah says,

﴿يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ﴾

“On the Day when Allah assembles all the Messengers and asks, ‘What

58 *Al-Nisā'*: 163

59 *Al-Mā'idah*: 12

response did you receive?”⁶⁰

This signifies the beginning of another topic which is that Allah will question you on the Day of Judgement as to how you lived up to this pledge. He will ask everyone including the Messengers, even the last of them to die, *Īsā*,

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَعْيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ أَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ﴾

“When Allah says, ‘Jesus son of Mary, did you say to people, ‘Take me and my mother as two gods alongside Allah’?”⁶¹

Sūrah al-An‘ām

The theme of *Sūrah al-An‘ām* is to establish proofs and evidences for worshipping Allah alone. Allah says in the eighth that begins with the verse,

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ يُعَلِّمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ﴾

“He has the keys to the unseen: no one knows them but Him. He knows all that is in the land and sea.”⁶²

This verse is the beginning of the fifth topic which is the fifth proof for worshipping Allah alone; that He alone is the One who knows all of your affairs and needs, and possess the keys of mercy. Due to His knowledge and mercy, He has made life comfortable and enjoyable for you. Therefore, is He not deserving to be worshipped alone?

60 *Al-Mā'idah*: 109

61 *Al-Mā'idah*: 116

62 *Al-An‘ām*: 59

In the eighth that begins with the verse,

﴿وَاذْكُرْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ رَأَىٰ أَن تَحْذِفُ صُفْمًا مِّنَ آلِهَتِهِ﴾

*“Remember when Ibrāhīm said to his father, Āzar, ‘How can you take idols as gods?’”*⁶³

This verse indicates the beginning of the ninth topic which is the ninth proof for worshipping Allah alone; that scholars and those of pure intellects attest to Allah’s oneness. The greatest example of this is your father Ibrāhīm, who established this proof upon his people.

In the eighth that begins with the verse,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَىٰ﴾

*“It is Allah who splits open the seed and the fruit stone...”*⁶⁴

This verse is the eleventh proof for worshipping Allah alone; that this perfect universe runs on its perfect laws and scales which all point to a single perfect Creator, and that perfect Creator is therefore deserving of all worship.

You can therefore determine the topics of a *sūrah* by contemplating over the beginning verses of a new quarter or eighth.

63 Al-An‘ām: 74

64 Al-An‘ām: 95

Chapter Six

A Number of Plainly Connected Verses

Where there are a number of verses speaking to the same subject, then this points to a single topic by the permission of Allah.

Sūrah al-Shūrā

Allah says,

﴿فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَثِيرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشِ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ
شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِثْلُهَا ۚ فَمَنْ عَفَا
وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظِلْمِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَاعَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ﴿٤١﴾ إِنَّمَا
السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَمَنِ صَبَرَ وَعَفَرَ ۚ إِنَّ
ذَٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزِيزِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٤٣﴾﴾

“What you have been given is only the fleeting enjoyment of this world. Far better and more lasting is what Allah will give to those who believe and trust in their Lord; who shun great sins and gross indecencies; who forgive when they are angry; respond to their Lord; keep up the prayer; conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; give to others out of what We have provided for them; and defend themselves when they are oppressed. Let harm be requited by an equal harm, though anyone who forgives and puts things right will have his reward from Allah Himself – He does not like those who do wrong. There is no cause to act against anyone who defends himself after being wronged, but there is cause to act against those who oppress people and transgress in the land against all justice – they will have an agonizing torment – though if a person is patient and forgives, this is one of the greatest things.”⁶⁵

You will find in the above guidelines a clear and strong link; it speaks to the topic of advice in cultivating the leaders of the ummah. This is one of the topics of *Sūrah al-Shūrā*.

Sūrah al-An‘ām

Allah says,

﴿وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هَذَا لِلَّهِ بِرَعْمِهِمْ وَهَذَا

لِشُرَكَائِنَا﴾

“They apportion to Allah a share of the produce and the livestock He created, saying, ‘This is for Allah’ – so they claim! – ‘and this is for our idols.’”⁶⁶

Up until the verse,

⁶⁵ *Al-Shūrā*: 36-43

⁶⁶ *Al-An‘ām*: 136

﴿فَدَخِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى

اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾﴾

“Lost indeed are those who kill their own children out of folly, with no basis in knowledge, forbidding what Allah has provided for them, fabricating lies against Him: they have gone far astray and have heeded no guidance.”⁶⁷

These verses combine in showing the folly of the laws and ways of the polytheists and their idols. This is the topic here. According to their laws, they would apportion a gift to Allah and gifts to their idols. The gifts to their idols could not be given towards Allah but Allah’s portion could be given to their idols.

From their laws and ways was the burying alive of their daughters. They did this out of fear of the shame they thought that they brought, and instead they claimed that by killing those young girls, they would be joined with the angels who they believed to be the daughters of Allah – far removed is Allah from their statement. Similarly, they would sacrifice a male child if a person was granted more than ten male children.

Their laws also included giving their gods livestock, crops and fruits, to do with as they or their leaders wished. There were also animals exempted from labour, and other animals sacrificed in the names of their gods instead of the name of Allah. Furthermore, if a male lamb was born, they would slaughter it but only allow the men to eat from its meat and not the women. A female lamb was left alive and carrion meat was jointly consumed by both men and women. All of the above revolves around the same topic; the foolishness of the laws of idolatry and polytheism. Are such laws worthy of adopting?

67 Al-An‘ām: 140

Sūrah al-Naḥl

Allah says,

﴿وَاللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا⁶⁸﴾

“It is Allah who sends water down from the sky and with it revives the earth when it is dead.”⁶⁸

Up until the verse,

﴿وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ⁶⁹﴾

“And it is Allah who has given you spouses from amongst yourselves and through them He has given you children and grandchildren and provided you with good things”⁶⁹

Allah here mentions one out of many examples of His blessings; His countless provisions which demand gratitude to Him and worship of Him.

He mentions His provision as being water, livestock, the milk which those animals produce, the variety of fruits and the honey that contains a cure for many illnesses. He also created you and granted you souls, allowed you to remain living, and bestowed upon you wealth, spouses, children, grandchildren and many other blessings. All this is included under the topic of Allah’s many bounties which should make us grateful to Him and encourage us to worship Him.

68 Al-Naḥl: 65

69 Al-Naḥl: 72

However,

﴿وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِنَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ شَيْئًا﴾

“Those they worship besides God have no power to provide anything for them from the heavens or the earth...”⁷⁰

Therefore, if you see an apparent link between a number of verses and all of them speak about a single subject matter, then know that this is one of the main topics of the *sūrah*, by Allah’s permission.

⁷⁰ Al-Naḥl: 73

Chapter Seven

The Name of the *Sūrah*

Sometimes the name of the *sūrah* points to one of the topics to be discussed.

Sūrah al-Isrā'

The theme of *Sūrah al-Isrā'* is to show the great miracles and divine gifts given by Allah to the Prophet (ﷺ) and his *ummah*. One such great miracle was the Night Journey that the Prophet (ﷺ) went on from Masjid al-Harām to Masjid al-Aqṣā where he led the other Prophets in prayer. He then ascended to the heavens, passing millions of galaxies and travelled the distance of thousands of light years in a single night. He finished on his journey at the seventh heaven where he saw amazing signs that filled his heart with love and awe of Allah, and expelled from his heart all sorrow, grief and anxiety. He returned from that journey joyful with a heart full of hope. Thus, the naming of this *sūrah* as *Isrā'* is an indication of one of its topics.

Sūrah Maryam

The theme of this particular sūrah is the mercy of Allah which touches the heart of the believer and envelops him with good news during times of trial. The more severe the trial the greater the divine glad tidings.

We see this in the story of Maryam. As she was undergoing a major test, glad tidings came to her from every direction. As she gave birth, she heard a voice calling out to her, calming and soothing her,

﴿فَادْنَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا لَا تَخْزِي ۖ قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا ۝ وَهَرَىٰ إِلَيْكَ بِجَنَاحِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا ۝ جَنِيًّا ۝﴾

“But a voice cried to her from below, ‘Do not worry: your Lord has provided a stream at your feet. And, if you shake the trunk of the palm tree towards you, it will deliver fresh ripe dates for you.’”⁷¹

When she then faced her people who accused her of something grave, her baby spoke from the cradle proclaiming the innocence of his courageous mother in front of her people,

﴿إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ۖ آتَانِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا ۝ وَجَعَلَني مُبَارَكًا ۖ إِنِّي مَا كُنتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ ۝ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا ۝ وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدِي ۖ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا ۝ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ۝﴾

“...: ‘I am a servant of Allah. He has granted me the Scripture; made me a prophet; made me blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live, to cherish my mother. He did not make me domineering or graceless. Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.’”⁷²

71 Maryam: 24-25

72 Maryam: 30-33

Therefore, the story of Maryam is one of the topics of this *sūrah*, the topic being to know that at times when tests surround you, Allah protects and helps you. The name of the *sūrah* then points to one of its topics.

Sūrah al-Ḥajj

The theme of this *sūrah* is to show how Allah has honoured and favoured this *ummah*. This can be seen through the many virtues Allah has placed within this *ummah*. One such example is that it will be the only nation to be half the inhabitants of Paradise,

﴿يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَرَىٰ
وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَرَىٰ﴾

*“On the Day you see it, every nursing mother will think no more of her baby, every pregnant female will miscarry, you will think people are drunk when they are not...”*⁷³

Allah has also honoured this nation with knowledge, strong evidences, a perfect religion and a Shining Book which is the everlasting miracle protected until it will be lifted before the Day of Judgement. This honour afforded to this nation increases the more that it holds onto the call of *tawḥīd* and fights *shirk*.

This nation has further been honoured with one of the greatest acts of worship; prostration. Those unable to prostrate have been disgraced,

﴿وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ﴾

73 Al-Ḥajj: 2

“Anyone disgraced by Allah will have no one to honour him.”⁷⁴

This is why this *sūrah* is the only one in which there are two prostrations for recitation.

From the honours afforded to this *ummah* are the teachings of *Hajj* which began with the Prophet Ibrāhīm. He proclaimed the pilgrimage to mankind and this nation was the one to respond to that call,

﴿وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا﴾

“Proclaim the pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you on foot...”⁷⁵

Allah has favoured this nation by defending it and punishing its enemies. He has preserved its Divine Book from the corruption and manipulation of human and *jinn* devils,

﴿فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ﴾

“...but Allah removes what Satan insinuates and then Allah affirms His message.”⁷⁶

We see from the above that *Hajj* is one of the topics of this *sūrah* which speaks to the special honours Allah has given to this *ummah*. The name therefore speaks to the topic.

And all praise is for Allah, Lord of all that exists.

74 Al-*Hajj*: 18

75 Al-*Hajj*: 27

76 Al-*Hajj*: 52

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